

## **Privacy in Accordance with “Memories are made of this...”**

**Spring 2009**

Mårten Spångberg

Performance issues identification, at least in two ways. My task as an audience member is to interpret a series of utterances, a process that produces and consolidates identity in relation to work. Work and its environment simultaneously invite the spectator to participate in processes of identification. Theatre, which is more or less any activity taking place on stage, is therefore always popular. Its address is communal and its production homogenizing. Yet there are moments when theatre cracks open, when it slips away from the abysmal travelling into depths and also from the covering of distances that are explored along surfaces: moments when the theatre play-out of interest is nothing else than material and energetic agency, manifesting itself inside and outside of its assemblages. Such theatre may at the first glance be all too easily misunderstood as an expression of egotism or narcissism, a self-referential production that turns its interest away from the expressed to the expressing, yet remains within an identitarian, though sometimes reversed regime, but that would mean overlooking its central concern: moving away from the politics of identification to the processes of individuation, departing from all conventional strata of interpretation and towards those situations in which the spectator is permitted to engage in affectual production, i.e. away from the maintenance of police, or of politics, towards a possible emergence of The Political.

“Memories...” in particular, but also the entire body of work created and performed by BADco., are close to being a turning point in the context of present-day performance; they are a shift away from semiotic agency towards the capacities of experience. This Zagreb-based group appears to have consolidated neither its form of performance nor its realm of content, or even its mode of production. Their assured, conscious ignorance of the context dominated by regimes of display, combined with an internal exegesis, or rather an elaborate care of the self, has made them develop an emancipated set of technologies of contemporaneity. However, the fact that they are not activated within any ideology of aesthetics is due to a determined mastery of a set of skills in relation to the given ideological machinery. The practice of BADco., which transforms this noun into a verb, largely owing to the way in which they are constantly reconsidering their collaboration, is a constant process of coding and recoding. Thus, the practicing of BADco., which is in no respect void of or free from aesthetic values, ideologies, form

etc., but is nevertheless emancipated, consists of elaborating a system of ethics: specific in expression or medium, yet general with respect to its applicability.

BADco. operates through and within a paradox, between the technologies of contemporaneity and the elaboration of ethics, necessarily intimidating classical theatre while operating as an agency of creative actions, which do not simply break or obey the rules (simultaneously confirming them by the very act of transgression), but change the grammatical system itself, operating within, as well as upon, a space or a situation where these grammatical rules cannot be distinguished from the event.

In its classical and contemporary sense, theatre employs a model that is based on facilitating of identification, for example, or the opportunities of interpretation, and is therefore essentially static and immobile, operating through sets of rules that abolish any possibility for strategic or structural transformation or displacement. Due to that, both differentiation and differentiability necessitate a distributed decision that cannot be referred to by normative rules. The application of rules escapes determination, yet precisely because of that it enables action. Within a Kantian regime, representation would imply the very extinction of such actions - which would make it perfectly agreeable to certain ideological and economical contexts - placing itself “outside” the action. It is only possible to articulate the meaning of an action/situation in relation to the action that has been undertaken to transform it. An art, or activation that has an aim of setting creative actions in motion, aspires neither to a truth (ethics) nor to a statement (ideology); it is always questioned and therefore always political.

The different articulation of participation, or perhaps more adequately of attention, which is proposed in “Memories are made of this...,” implies new modes of subjectification, which are both political and existential. It is a kind of attention that shifts the perspective from defensive tendencies of structural allocation to a benevolent, heterogeneous allocation in dynamic resources, emphasizing the opportunity for a multiplicity of new modes of subjectification, which may apply to every engaged subject, independently of its hierarchical position, through equity rather than equality (which is a common watchword in theatre).

This differentiated mode of attention, combined with the insistence on multiplicity of experience in the used framework, addresses our understanding of privacy and its production/productivity, a privacy that can be understood both literally and metaphorically.

Privacy is neither operative nor procedural, and must therefore be abstracted from the impulse of locating. Procedure consists of a general and identifiable, repeatable, finite,

and descriptive formula that possesses content, but a content that is subordinate to its potentiality as a formula of production. Operation, on the other hand, is a specific, serial (non-repeatable), infinite, and non-descriptive production prescribed for a certain set of procedures, and its effective nature could not be grasped in and for itself in a general form of its process. The opportunity to articulate a notion of privacy as emancipated not only from all formal, semantic content, but also from the metaphysics of the everyday, depends on this twofold directionality.

Procedure is perpetually affiliated to a set of operations and vice versa. Operation is immanently multiple, since it safeguards its articulation from endangering potential openness. Articulation of a set of operations functions as a means to comprehend: not what a particular privacy may communicate, but what that communication is. It is a notion of privacy that is inclined to decisions or decision-making, rather than stratification, and is consequently producing differentiation in an active and empowering constitution.

A pure discourse of operations to which interpretation could be correlated is incommensurable, as any operation's contingent to a singularity that is relevant to a defined practice is immediately reprehended through interpretation. Operations are indeterminable to a single interpretative governance and effective in congruity to permission instead of license, whereby permission differs from license in terms of direction: license conditions something general towards something specific, whereas permission acts from the specific to the general. Operations support identification solely in the conjunction between divergent interpretations, relating to the way in which a procedure consistently develops a coordination of multiple meanings, with elements that are inscribed in a process of differentiation constitutive to the maintenance of reconcilability, or simply form. A singular procedure can be utilized, interpreted, adjusted, and adapted to fundamentally different intentions, whereas an operation, or a set of operations, is perpetually singular, independently of what regime it may refer to.

“Memories...” do not set out to define privacy, or to capture its ontogenesis; a privacy that would be commensurate with the techniques and technologies of surveillance, control and consumer-motivation. They engage in the production of privacy (or privacies) that is neither self-evident nor straightforward, a privacy that is constantly contested and consequently political. Their objective is to invent a radically different form of privacy, which will intervene into and work with the situation of privacy rather than simply reacting to it.

“Memories...” initially indicate a tension between the conjunctive layout (differentiation) and the disjunctive laid out (differentiation), inclined to contest the

mechanisms by which the analysis of change has been delegated to psychology, sociology, and even technology, a process that has emptied scientific research of every fundamental dialectical concept, without which we are unable to understand anything at all. It re-examines the empirics beyond research methodologies that standardize privacy as a field of objects (rules), but engages the movement of contingencies that is inherent to immanence and to processes of subjectivation.

It is precisely the fleeting conditions of privacy that must be urgently maintained, secured, and accumulated. The aim is, firstly, to avoid the exclusion of particular modes of conducting life, or certain modes of existence, from the common understanding of privacy. Notions of privacy must insist on being non-discursive, i.e. they must function as an expression of practice as it subsists in experience; hence they should not be reducible to a grammar or to a whole field of vision. Secondly, privacy must remain open, resist institutionalization, and insist on being understood as an organization. A normative privacy is simply no privacy at all.

Considering all possible endangerments of privacy (or the private sphere) implies that it is possible to detect an agency that conditions its existence. Essentially, that agency ought to coincide with the state, in most cases a participatory democracy. Accordingly, privacy is conditioned by the public, by the people or individuals to whom privacy is given, which implies that privacy is *ipso facto* a public domain, assuming that the state can gain access to its intrinsic and extrinsic endeavours. A strong democratic state is therefore predisposed to condition a privacy that is predominately institutionalized, i.e. a privacy that is linear, transparent, and hierarchical, which implies its own obliteration. Privacy conditioned by the state must be recognized as a given, structural matter, governed by a set of rules that turn privacy into an illusion. These rules offer to the citizens rights, rights that can be exercised but never exorcised, precisely because they are instigated by the state. Less dramatically, one could say that if privacy is governed by the state, it becomes obsolete to criticism, since the state is the entity that also governs criticism.

This could be understood as implying that the crises of private and public spheres are significant indicators of a dissolving state, a democratic apparatus that has lost track of its time. The conundrum is that these indications can only address democracy either from within the democracy itself, or from a reactive stanza that in its turn confirms the reconstruction of a democratic apparatus which is already in crisis. But then again, it is precisely owing to this crisis, and precisely because it is so complex and impossible to define, that we can today engage in discussions on privacy, public space, and democracy. Crisis, albeit with negative connotations, constitutes a dissolved or dissolving grammar - a de-territorialisation - that opens up towards the production of discourse. The crux, however, is to avoid those revisionist strategies that tend to attack concepts with the very

arguments that they have initially opposed, rather than articulating critical or reflexive practices. We can certainly resort to collective mourning, but the battle is already being fought and we must insist on not falling back to semantic legibility or formal rhetoric as a response to the anomies of our contemporary condition. Instead, we must articulate new methods with respect to the contestation of privacy, the public sphere, and ultimately democracy.

The crisis of the private sphere and its weakened institution results in a transformation, a shift away from semiotic signification and towards affectual production. Notions of privacy, security, etc. can no longer be described, but are still operating through modes of emergence.

Crises are signals without signification, signals that contest the whole field of vision. If a signal triggers, activation follows, prolonging the situation along the lines of flight. Activation precedes action and is cumulative, unlike action, which unfolds progressively, step-by-step. Activation consists of irritations and acts through intensities of experience rather than its content. Activation captures the body in a way, cancelling all separation between the body and its environment. Its experience is the crisis. Experience is a dynamic ingathering of activation, assuring the continuity of its serial unfolding and moving the reality of the situation, which has an affective quality.

That is to say that discourse on privacy in crisis may offer only an *activational outline*: a variation in the intensity of feeling over time. It addresses the irritability of bodies (positive or negative) rather than the cognition of subjects. Activational outlines are perceptual cues that directly activate the responsiveness of the body, rather than reproducing a form or transmitting definite content.

Activational outlines can exploit opportunities of both positive and negative character. A suspended affectual state, a state in which the subject is incapable, or unable to identify e.g. a crisis, offers an opportunity of manipulating that subject, multiplicity, or community into searching for an exit, an escape that would be independent of their political, ideological, or ethical characteristics. In that condition, the subject will instinctively acquire capacities for escape in order to overcome the situation and enter into a reflexive mood, but as long as all lines of flight are suspended, deliberately or not, it will remain in a state of fear or anxiety. A suspended threat to the private sphere, in other words, can be used to pacify a subject or a community, and to compartmentalize it, so to say, making it unable to distinguish good from bad governance. A subject under threat or a community subject to the possibility of terror will give permission to the state to circumvent democracy or to disregard e.g. the Geneva Convention.

Crises of privacy and the public sphere suddenly appear as an interesting terrain for regimes that cannot offer a relevant policy to be explored. Crisis becomes a tool for modulating collective individuation. Through mass media, it addresses the population from the angle of its potential to re-individuate differentially. As long as a regime can keep the crisis at arm-length's distance, its inhabitants will remain loyal, though only as long as the activation remains cumulative and does not transform into actions, since these would, instead of operating through processual dimensions, have grammatical rules, and that is the point in which crisis would become the content of experience.

From a corporate perspective, a crisis that concerns privacy is generally positive, although its motivation is an oscillation between activation and action, a pulsating, yet expanding motion of territorial coagulation. A structural and state-governed privacy functions as a cul-de-sac for corporate economies, which build upon transformations in relationship to demand. Crisis is conditioned by movement. Corporate economies synchronically support continuity and fragmentation, movement and its breaks, as a means of continuously re-contextualizing demand. Insight into our private sphere is evidently favourable, but it would be too hasty to judge that corporate economies are interested in transparency or in abolishing the private sphere. Instead, corporate forces are interested in a private sphere that is as multiple and dynamic as possible, conditioned by the possibility of statistic application or the opportunity of measurement. The private sphere will always be subject to movement, independently of its degree of institutionalization, which renders the benevolent relation to corporate economies favourable. The privacy enunciated by corporate economies is simultaneously expanding and contracting, mobile and immobile. Hence our interest into the way in which "Memories..." function as a dialectical image does not concern the question whether participation exists or not, but what kind of participation it is. If our political reality has lost its dissentient or antagonistic fundament, then contemporary corporate economies must necessarily engage in antagonistic discourse production and strategies, if for no other reasons, then in order to increase customers' demands. Such participation could be understood as subversive affirmation, or rather affirmative affirmation, i.e. a set of political tactics that allows for participation in certain socio-political or economical discourse, and affirm or consume them while simultaneously undermining them. In such discourse, subversive affirmation is characterized by the idea that affirmation simultaneously produces a secondary trajectory, which reveals what is being affirmed. Affirmative affirmation argues that deliberate constructions of secondary trajectories are in fact counter-effective, precisely because they feed on an already assumed failure of the "enemy". The point instead must be to acknowledge the potentialities of corporate interests and to replace the current trend of celebrating mimesis through pro-active merging and cooperation, although, and this is important, not on the level of expression, but through processes of structuralization.

The private sphere is neither a space nor a concept of consensus, but a configuration of dissensus. It is a multiplicity of spheres, spaces, and creative capacities, configured by its immanent impossibility, reciprocal to the fact that the society, as a totality, is impossible. The private sphere, however, is possible precisely because the society is impossible. Attempts to neutralize these inherent complexities, in particular the perpetual production of dissensus, the presence of two bodies in one, conditioning an antagonistic political reality, hinges on actualization and an ontogenetic force that must not be overlooked, since it includes the self-generative, irrational modes of collective individuation we call fascism.

A private sphere governed by fear is one emptied of content, since it is governed by sustained affectual production, a tactic as inconsiderate as it is politically decisive. Conceptions of the private sphere must be generative of friction instead of producing a consensus with recourse to rational and procedural meta-grammar. This results in a conception of the private sphere as a non-representational operability, configured by its inherent impossibility and a perpetual production of dissensus, open for opportunities to discard privacy. It is a private sphere configured through structural confinements and instigated as an institution, but also understood as an agency of creative actions that are not simply a matter of breaking or obeying the rules (simultaneously affirming them in the act of transgression), but actions that change the grammatical system itself, operating within, and upon, a space where grammatical rules cannot be distinguished from the empirical event. Privacy understood as a creative action is the reversed correlative to the state of exception.

True innovation, as opposed to formally indifferent modification of the commodity (the structured notion of privacy), involves a distributed decision that cannot be referred to any normative condition or application of grammatical rules. This is in accord with Wittgenstein's observation that rules can never stipulate their own application. Seen that way, experience functions as a generative principle of dissensus, in the creation of differentiation of privacy and its spheres.

BADco. sets in action an unconditional escape from *what*; a good question in order to discover an essence or locate an idea i.e. constructive of an end of politics and of dissensus, in favour of questions characterized by: *who?*, *how much?*, *where?*, *in which case?*, which create particular spaces and times, determining the double aspect of differentiation (qualitative) and differentiation (quantitative) and outlining a movement of dramatisation. For BADco., there is always something beneath representation, a "drama" beneath all logos, a privacy without bounds, an attention becoming a subject.